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### **[Review of] Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer (eds), The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose**

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**The Lambeth Conference: Theology, History, Polity and Purpose**, eds Paul Avis and Benjamin M. Guyer, Bloomsbury, 2017 (ISBN 978-0-5676-6231-6), 459 pp., hb £85

The global meeting of Anglican bishops known as the Lambeth Conference usually convenes once every ten years. The next conference, being prepared for 2020, will be two years late, to allow relationships within the Anglican Communion to improve before the meeting. This collection of essays is therefore both timely preparation for participants and other interested Anglicans across the globe, such as clergy and seminarians, and an important long-term academic contribution to recording the Conference's history and interpreting its complex ecclesiological dynamics.

The first part comprises ten theological, historical and constitutional studies. Stephen Pickard charts the Conference's rise as an 'instrument of communion' alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury, and, more recently, the Anglican Consultative Council (1968) and the Primates' Meeting (1978). The first meeting, which was held in 1867 and lasted just four days, was for 'communion, conference and consultation' (p. 3). These purposes remain essentially unchanged today, although the duration is now a couple of weeks, but in 1958 extended to as many as five weeks. Paul Avis surveys the relation between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Conference. The Archbishop has a major role in defining priorities and style, issues invitations and hosts attendees. The conference grounds the Archbishop's role ecclesologically rather than organizationally, as a bishop amongst other bishops. Benjamin M. Guyer very illuminatingly recounts the political sensitivities surrounding the first Conference: it could not be a synod nor enact canons, because this would have amounted to a direct challenge to the royal supremacy, which had been asserted at the Reformation to counter the power of the Pope. By the twentieth century, in Guyer's words, the 'eventual absence of an active royal supremacy within the Church of England resulted in a significant vacuum of authority within the wider Anglican Communion' (p. 55), with the Crown being its 'absent and largely forgotten centre' (p. 83). Mark D. Chapman describes the role of the American priest William Reed Huntington in formulating the Chicago–Lambeth Quadrilateral of Scripture, the Creeds, the two Sacraments and the Episcopate. The Quadrilateral could be regarded as updating and simplifying the Thirty-Nine Articles, and from its inception has been an important Anglican identity marker in ecumenical conversations. Indeed, it suggests that 'Anglicanism' is at least as much a United States construct as an English notion. Charlotte Methuen highlights the new ecumenical impetus given to the 1920 Conference by the desire to build a peaceful global unity, tracing this forward to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

In the book's largest chapter, Ephraim Radner diachronically narrates how mission was a goal of earlier conferences, in part to counter Roman Catholic expansion and then secularism. But

mission is now a destabilizing force for the Communion, having brought major shifts in Anglicanism's geographical concentration and thereby in its theology, with an associated increase in unilateral actions by member Churches. Focusing on the English context, Jeremy Morris points out the importance in the Evangelical tradition of the legal authority of bishops, and traces the professionalization of the episcopate from its origins in the 'busy' bishop of the Victorian Church. Andrew Goddard reviews the place of sexuality in the Conference, culminating in the infamous 1998 resolution 1.10, even though at preceding Conferences divisions on polygamy had placed African member Churches under pressure. Gregory K. Cameron describes the emergence out of the Windsor Process of the ill-fated Anglican Covenant, which was intended to promote listening and to establish a framework for resolving disagreements within the Communion. The Covenant was effectively scuppered when many English dioceses failed to ratify it. The Church of England's General Synod requires such endorsement of any change in relations with the other Anglican Churches, but apparently no-one leading the Covenant process foresaw this insurmountable obstacle. Finally, Norman Doe and Richard Deadman discuss the legal status of Conference resolutions against the background of the twenty-first Article of Religion, which emphasizes the fallibility of Church Councils. The matter of common standards has become pressing since liturgical revision, which has seen the end of the *Book of Common Prayer* as a unifying liturgical and doctrinal norm. Moreover, member Churches have varying legal understandings of the possibility and process of doctrinal revision.

Part two contains seven personal, pastoral and political perspectives, which will be of special interest to practitioners. Cathy Ross reflects on postcolonial mission then Martyn Percy unfashionably defends what he sees as the indirect, or 'oblique', nature of traditional Anglican (or English?) theology and practice. Mark D. Thompson critically surveys the pathway to recent Anglican crises and maps the conservative Evangelical response, while Mary Tanner celebrates Conference ecumenism. Alyson Barnett-Cowan contrasts the very different 1998 and 2008 Conferences, Donald Bolen offers a receptive Roman Catholic perspective, and Victoria Matthews considers the memory of the Conference from the standpoint of a participating bishop.

The editors sought some contributions from African ecclesiologists and theologians but were unfortunately unable to obtain any. The result is a volume that is, from a factual viewpoint, highly informative, but doesn't bring the full range of Anglican voices into the serious academic, historical and ecclesiological debate that will be needed to resolve current issues. Part of the problem is that, within the Anglican Communion, we more frequently hear African voices via their Western intellectual and financial patrons than directly. This is neo-colonialism. Spaces need to be created for such voices to emerge in their full diversity. Despite popular presentations, not all African Anglicans agree on how to deal with polygamy, nor even with same-sex relationships. We should hope,

although must dare not expect, that the 2020 Lambeth Conference will succeed in creating such spaces.

David Grumett

University of Edinburgh